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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000649

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: PRESIDENT'S ANALYSIS OF PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTION OUTCOME

REF: SKOPJE 640 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY.

11. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador July 6, President Crvenkovski characterized the recent parliamentary election process as "good," and asked for continued support from the Ambassador during the process of the formation of the new government. Analyzing electoral results, Crvenkovski said citizens desiring a change in Macedonia had bet on the party with the best chances of winning -- VMRO-DPMNE. The victory of eAlbanian DUI over rival DPA signaled the desire of the eAlbanian electorate to opt for a future as citizens of Macedonians, an encouraging outcome. Crvenkovski said it would be important to include an eAlbanian party in the next government, preferably DUI, to demonstrate respect for the will of the eAlbanian electorate. It also would be important to exclude the nationalist VMRO-Narodna party, since their participation would undermine the next government's reform program and efforts to combat organized crime and corruption.

12. (C) Crvenkovski appeared to be probing our thinking on which coalition combinations might meet with USG approval. Our position is that we can support and work with any coalition that is the result of procedures outlined in the constitution and parliamentary rule book, but that any future government should exclude as cabinet ministers or other ranking representatives anyone who came to power through intimidation or electoral malfeasance.

GOOD ELECTORAL PROCESS OVERALL

13. (U) The Ambassador met with President Crvenkovski, at the latter's request, July 6 to discuss next steps after the July 5 parliamentary elections. Crvenkovski's Chief of Staff Natasa Savova attended. DCM and P/E Chief (notetaker) accompanied the Ambassador.

14. (SBU) Crvenkovski said that, barring a handful of incidents during the campaign, the electoral process overall had been good. There had been some small irregularities, Crvenkovski said, but he was generally satisfied with developments on July 5. Especially noteworthy, he added, was the "lack of turbulence" following the closing of the polls at 7 pm, and the acceptance by most parties of the outcome as the product of a free and fair process.

¶5. (SBU) Crvenkovski added that the telephone call from Prime Minister Buckovski to VMRO-DPMNE leader Gruevski congratulating the latter on his electoral victory, and the lack of triumphalism evident in Gruevski's modest victory celebration that evening, also were positive developments (reftel). He said he hoped the same atmosphere would prevail during the negotiations on a coalition to succeed the present government. The President asked the Ambassador for her continued support and good offices to help ensure that process continued in a constructive fashion.

IMPORTANCE OF OSCE/ODIHR, BRUSSELS, AND WASHINGTON ASSESSMENTS

¶6. (C) Crvenkovski said the OSCE/ODIHR assessment of the conduct of the elections would be important, but noted that evaluations in Brussels and Washington would be of even greater import for Macedonia's EU and NATO membership aspirations. A negative assessment would, he said, be a great disappointment to the citizens of Macedonia, who believed the elections had been conducted in a calm, positive manner. (NOTE: ODIHR's preliminary assessment, released the afternoon of July 6, characterized the elections as having "largely met international standards." Both the USG and EU statements on the elections, also released July 6, described them as successful and a victory for the citizens of Macedonia. END NOTE.)

¶7. (SBU) The Ambassador noted USG satisfaction with the conduct of the electoral process. Compared to past elections, there had been far fewer allegations of violence and attempted intimidation. The police had been effective in serving as a deterrent at polling stations, but without

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interfering in the electoral process. The political parties had, for the most part, behaved maturely. Overall, the US Embassy shared the international community's (IC) positive evaluation of the elections and would, in its assessment, situate the isolated problems or incidents in the overall context of a mainly positive election day.

CRVENKOVSKI'S ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS: RATIONAL VOTING

¶8. (C) Pointing to opposition VMRO-DPMNE's clear victory (reftel), Crvenkovski said the results demonstrated the "average Macedonian's rationality." Citizens who wanted a change in government had voted for the party most likely to win. That was why many smaller parties that had competed had failed to enter the parliament, a development Crvenkovski welcomed.

¶9. (C) Even more significant than VMRO-DPMNE's victory over the SDSM (Crvenkovski's party), however, was the significant DUI win (18 seats) vis-a-vis DPA (11 seats). The outcome had been somewhat less than DUI leader Ahmeti had anticipated, according to Crvenkovski, but it nevertheless constituted a convincing victory. The Ambassador commented that the significant DUI margin over DPA also represented an eAlbanian vote in favor of a future as citizens of Macedonia, as opposed to the more separatist vision of DPA.

BUILDING THE NEXT GOVERNMENT -- NEED TO INCLUDE ETHNIC ALBANIAN PARTY...

¶10. (C) Noting that this was VMRO-DPMNE leader Gruevski's first experience with forming a coalition government, Crvenkovski said he hoped the next government would include an eAlbanian party. He believed Gruevski should offer a place in the coalition to DUI, since that would demonstrate respect for the will of the eAlbanian citizens of Macedonia who had voted in far larger numbers for DUI than for DPA. Courting DPA, on the other hand, would signal a rejection of the popular will of eAlbanians here. Adding that there was no obligation to include DUI, or indeed any eAlbanian party, in a coalition, he said failure to do so would be a "mistake

politically."

...AND EXCLUDE NATIONALIST VMRO-NARODNA PARTY HEADED BY
FORMER PRIME MINISTER

¶11. (C) If Gruevski needed a third party to comprise a coalition (VMRO-DPMNE and DUI together would give the government 62 seats, enough to form a government, but by a margin of only two seats in the 120-seat unicameral parliament), Crvenkovski said he hoped Gruevski would not/not invite VMRO-Narodna (a nationalist VMRO breakaway party headed by former PM Georgievski) to join. Georgievski's campaign had been characterized by an anti-reform stance, including opposition to the Framework Agreement, Kosovo independence, and the IMF and World Bank. As a minor party, VMRO-Narodna could not, on its own, shift GOM policy on those issues, but it could work to undermine it. Including Georgievski also would undercut future GOM efforts to combat organized crime and corruption, he said. The President concluded by saying that the process of building a new government likely would produce a "long, hot summer."

COMMENT

¶12. (C) Crvenkovski appeared indirectly to be sounding us out on possible coalition arrangements, the subject of intensive media speculation since the results of the elections were announced July 6. He obviously favors a VMRO-DPMNE/DUI coalition, perhaps with minority support from NSDP (SDSM breakaway party) and its seven seats or another smaller party. Although such a coalition combination would make political sense, the position we are taking regarding likely coalition outcomes is that we can support any coalition that is the result of the procedures outlined in the constitution and the parliamentary rule book, but that any government should exclude ministers or other ranking officials who came to power through intimidation or malfeasance. End Comment.
MILOVANOVIC